WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: OCCUPANCY TAX COORDINATION

DATE: DECEMBER 14, 2009

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: OTHERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS KENNY KATE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR OF TOURISM

TESSIER LEISA GRANT, PRINCIPAL ACCOUNT CLERK, TOURISM

MERLINO JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
BENTLEY KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER

CHAMPAGNE DON McCoy, GREAT ESCAPE THEME PARK, LP
SIMMES ERIC FLUET, GREAT ESCAPE THEME PARK, LP

GOODSPEED KEVIN ROSA, THE SAGAMORE RESORT

JANICE FOX, BOLTON LANDING CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Wauneata Waller, Bolton Landing Chamber of Commerce Alice Grether, Director of Business and Tourism, City of

GLENS FALLS

DAVID KING, ADIRONDACK THEATER FESTIVAL MARK FLEISCHER, ADIRONDACK THEATER FESTIVAL

David Sefferd, The Hyde Collection Christine Dawson, The Hyde Collection

LYNN SMITH, WARRENSBURG CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
DENNIS MARTINEZ, WARRENSBURG CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
MIKE HILL, UPPER HUDSON MAPLE PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

Michael Dufault, President of the Last of the Mohicans

OUTDOOR DRAMA, INC.

JASON SHERRY, ADIRONDACK PROMOTIONS, LLC

Luisa Craige-Sherman, Lake George Chamber of Commerce

GEORGE GEDRY, QUEENSBURY LITTLE LEAGUE, INC. ROBERT BLAIS, MAYOR, VILLAGE OF LAKE GEORGE

CHARLENE DIRESTA, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Kenny called the meeting of the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee to order at 9:45 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Merlino, seconded by Mrs. Simmes and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Mr. Kenny stated that the purpose of the meeting was to award occupancy tax funding and he announced that they would open the floor to any applicant. He requested that the applicants limit their presentation to three minutes each.

Don McCoy, President of the Great Escape Theme Park, LP, introduced himself and Eric Fluet, Director of Marketing for the Great Escape Theme Park, LP. Mr. McCoy advised that they were applying for funding for the 2010 Holiday in the Park Event and thanked the Committee for their support of the 2009 Holiday in the Park Event. He reported that the 2009 Holiday in the Park Event was going well and the feedback from the community and the guests was favorable.

He said that visitors were coming from as far away as New York City. Mr. Fluet expressed that they were achieving the results that had been anticipated when they had applied for funding for the 2009 Holiday in the Park Event. He advised that at least half of the visitors were coming from the outer markets and added that the local community was in support of the event, which was a wonderful family event.

Mr. Kenny announced that the Committee had 36 applications for 2010 occupancy tax funding, said requests totaling \$636,070 and there was \$330,000 to award. He noted that the Committee had a scoring system and guidelines to assist them in their decisions. He said that economic impact on the community was one consideration.

Janice Fox, of the Bolton Landing Chamber of Commerce, stated that she had submitted an application on behalf of the Chamber for the Bolton Landing Women's Weekend. She introduced Kevin Rosa, Director of Marketing for the Sagamore Resort. She noted that the event was a 'Girlfriend Getaway' vacation package. She advised that the weekend would take place on May 14-16, 2010. She noted that the Sagamore Resort was the host hotel for the event. She apprised that the local merchants were on board and would participate in the event. She said that research showed that 24% of women had taken a 'Girlfriend Getaway' vacation in the past year; 39% of women planned to take one in the next three years; and most 'Girlfriend Getaways' included two to three women. Mr. Rosa reported that the Sagamore Resort had been operating a women's wellness program for the last five years. He added that they had to cancel it last year due to the construction. He advised that they had wanted to reinstate the program and make it a more town-wide event. He said that *Natural Health Magazine* was on board to be the sponsor. He advised that the program had approximately a 28% growth each year.

Mr. Merlino noted that he was pleased to see that the Town of Bolton had contributed funding to the event. He added that the individual Towns received occupancy tax disbursements from the County and the larger Towns received a significant amount. He advised that they would recommend that a lot of the applicants go to the Towns for funding and then return to the County for additional assistance.

Alice Grether, Director of Business and Tourism for the City of Glens Falls, said that she had submitted an application on behalf of the Cooperative Committee for an event entitled, 'Have a Seat in Glens Falls'. She advised that the event was a marketing tool to market the City of Glens Falls and the region. She advised that the Cooperative Committee was made up of the Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce, the City of Glens Falls, Crandall Public Library, Glens Falls Business Improvement District and the Lower Adirondack Regional Arts Council (LARAC). She said that the event had been modeled after a successful Catskill Project which was in its fifth year. She added that the event was intended to entice regional visitors, as well as visitors from outside the region to the area. She further added that its purpose was to highlight the cultural events and attractions that the City of Glens Falls had to offer. She apprised that there would be thirty to fifty chairs, which would be designed by area artists. She added that the chairs would be placed throughout downtown Glens Falls. She advised that the theme of each chair had to reflect the City of Glens Falls or its history. She said there would be group tour offerings through a partnership with the Queensbury Hotel. In answer to a question as to what would happen to the chairs, Ms. Grether responded that some of them would be auctioned off for the benefit of non-profit organizations.

Mark Fleischer, Producing Artistic Director for the Adirondack Theater Festival (ATF), thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak and for considering their application. He said that ATF produced a summer season of shows staffed with professional actors, artists and technicians from New York City and across the nation. In their recent season, he advised, ATF had offered 28 days and 35 public performances and had attracted close to 6,000 attendees. He stated that ATF had added a computerized ticketing system that allowed them to track visitors. He added that in the summer of 2009 the number of visitors from outside of the area nearly doubled. He further added that the visitors had come from 17 different states and two Canadian provinces. He advised that these were cultural tourists; a tourist segment that ranked the arts, heritage and cultural activities as the top five reasons for traveling. He said that according to a survey completed by the Travel Industry Association of America, compared to the average United States traveler, cultural tourists spent 27% more, stayed 53% longer and were 13% more likely to stay at a hotel, motel or bed and breakfast. He noted that ATF had experienced a 141% increase in patrons from Saratoga. He stated that shows that started at ATF often went on to have performances in New York City and across the country. He remarked that past funding from Warren County had allowed the ATF to market to people from outside of the area. He added that the request of \$18,000 was less than 5% of the amount that was needed to produce the festival each year and was a little more than 40% of their annual marketing budget.

David Sefferd, Director of the Hyde Collection, thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak and for their past support of the Degas Music Project. He apprised that the Degas Music Project had been an incredible success. Despite the decline in tourism, he added, they had attracted in excess of 80,000 visitors to the museum. He advised that the Season of Degas, which had been a collaborative effort with other counties that ran concurrently with the Degas Music Project, had attracted in excess of 66,000 visitors. He stated that they had collected zip codes from the visitors and 31% were from the City of Glens Falls; 31% were from the Capital District; and 33% were from farther away, including 11% from New England. He said that \$98,000 had been expended promoting and advertising the Degas Music Project. He added that for every dollar expended on promotion, they received approximately \$2 of in-kind services, including the billboards which had been displayed in Albany, New York. He explained that the run of the exhibition had generated 400 new members to the museum, of which 57% were from the Capital Region and beyond. He stated that the Hyde Collection Museum felt strongly that cultural tourists were the future of Glens Falls tourism. He advised that the application that he had submitted was for an exhibition entitled, Andrew Wyeth: An American Legend. He voiced his opinion that Andrew Wyeth was the one painter who epitomized Americana and touched everyone who saw his works. He added that Andrew Wyeth lived most of his life in New England and they would be promoting in that area. He stated that the amount to be expended on promotion was \$35,000 to \$40,000 and they were requesting \$25,000 in occupancy tax funding.

Dennis Martinez, of the Warrensburg Chamber of Commerce, introduced himself and his colleague, Lynn Smith. He advised that they were requesting occupancy tax funding for the World's Largest Garage Sale to be held October 2-3, 2010. He explained that the Garage Sale was losing vendors to the private sector, who did not contribute towards the expenses of the Garage Sale. He advised that they had reduced their expenses as much as possible and had eliminated the bus service. He added that landfill fees continued to increase, although last year they had received some money from the Town to help offset the expense. He said that in comparing the income levels from 2005 to 2009, there had been a decrease in income of

approximately \$13,000. He explained that the proceeds from the event were primarily used to fund the year-round staff. He stated that the event was growing larger each year and had migrated down to the northern portion of the Town of Lake George. He advised that the Warrensburg Chamber of Commerce did receive some funding from the Town of Warrensburg; however, he added, it was mostly used to fund other craft shows that were held during the year. Ms. Smith said that the World's Largest Garage Sale had attracted approximately 50,000 visitors in 2009. She added that it was a free event and they did not charge for the busses or the parking. She remarked that in past years they had attracted 70,000 to 100,000 visitors. She stated that this event did put 'heads in beds' and added that all of the bed and breakfast establishments in Warrensburg would be full, as well as 20 to 30 hotels in the Town of Lake George and the one or two motels in Warrensburg. She further added that the event filled hotels as far away as the Town of Chester and that campsites were usually full the weekend of the event. They had raffled off a gift basket in 2009, she said, in order to collect zip codes and they had visitors from New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont and Virginia. She added that the majority of the visitors stayed two to three nights.

Mr. Geraghty and Kate Johnson, Director of Tourism, entered the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Mike Hill, of the Upper Hudson Maple Producers Association, said that he was not a professional executive director or a marketing person, he was just a simple maple producer from the Town of Thurman. He apprised that for the last 15 years they had held the New York State Maple Weekend and added that they had started with one weekend a year and now were holding three weekends a year. He continued by saying that the event would be held in March, which he advised was one of the bleakest months for tourism. He explained that they had earmarked \$12,000 for advertising for 2010 and had hired a professional promoter. He added that \$2,200 would come from a Pride of New York grant and \$2,060 would come from a promotion grant. He stated that they were lacking \$7,740 of the funding necessary to advertise and were requesting \$5,000 in occupancy tax funding.

Michael Dufault, President of the Last of the Mohicans Outdoor Drama, Inc., thanked the Committee for the funding they had received in 2009. He stated that the funding had allowed them to display exerts in Shepard's Park and approximately 900 people had seen the performances over the summer. He advised that their ultimate goal was to create a large scale summer long production with professional actors, horses, cannons, etc. He added that experts predicted that such a production could produce \$10 million in economic impact. He continued by saying that due to the downturn in the economy, they would start smaller and build from there. He added that the goal for 2010 was to produce the full production for a one week limited engagement. He said they would like to do six performances of The Last of the Mohicans in early August. He apprised that August was the month that the historical events that served as a backdrop for the performance had taken place. He advised that they hoped to team up with other historical attractions and organizations in the area to produce a multivenue event. Due to 2010 being the first year of producing the show, he explained, there would be sizable expenses that they would not incur in the future.

Jason Sherry, of Adirondack Promotions, LLC, stated that they were requesting funding for three events in 2010: the 2010 Lake George Elvis Festival; the 2010 LakeGeorge.com Family Fun Festival; and the Hudson Valley Volunteer Firemen's Convention. He advised that this would be the second consecutive year of funding for the Lake George Elvis Festival and they were requesting \$12,000. He added that the Elvis Festival had generated a \$1.2 million

economic impact in 2009. He said that 51% of the attendees had come from destination markets. He stated that they had a marketing budget of \$51,000 and it had cost a total of \$153,000 to produce the event. He noted that they wanted to focus any contribution from the County in occupancy tax funding on the Motorcoach and tour markets. He added that they felt that by focusing on those markets they could create the largest impact to hotel rooms and continue to grow the event. Mr. Sherry apprised that the LakeGeorge.com Family Fun Festival was a new event that would take place the week after the July 4th weekend. He explained that they had chosen that week because the Warren County Star Report showed that the County had experienced a decline in occupancy tax collections in that week in 2009. He said that it was a week that the restaurants, hotels and shops were open for business with a vast amount of vacancies in the hotels. He stated that the event was budgeted at \$36,000 for 2010 and there were in excess of \$20,000 in marketing expenses. He advised that they had secured \$12,000 in private sector funding and they were requesting \$18,000 in occupancy tax funding from the County. Mr. Sherry apprised that the Hudson Valley Volunteer Firemen's Convention had been held in Lake George for two consecutive years and 2010 would be the third year. He said that the Association had hired Adirondack Promotions, LLC to produce the event for 2010. He stated that it was an expensive event to produce but it generated approximately \$2 million in economic impact to the County. He explained that the budget for the event was approximately \$108,000 and they were requesting \$40,000 in occupancy tax funding.

Luisa Craige Sherman, Executive Director of the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce, said that they were requesting funding for two events: the Lake George Region Restaurant Week and the Canadian Visitor Promotion Program. She advised that the Canadian Visitor Promotion Program had been up and running and had garnered great statistics over the last couple of years. She said that in past years they had done a 5 to 6 month promotion program which they planned to expand to a 12 month program in 2010. She apprised that the Canadian Visitor Promotional Program had generated approximately 1,365 'bed nights' in 2009 and had reached 1.75 million readers. She explained that they did direct marketing and were starting a quarterly newsletter to the Canadian subscribers. She said that their advertising listed all upcoming events throughout the County. Ms. Sherman apprised that the second application was for the Lake George Region Restaurant Week which would be expanded to two weeks in 2010. She added that in 2009 the event had produced approximately 1,390 'bed nights', which was nearly double when compared to 2008. She advised that visitors came from 75 to 100 miles away for the event. She explained that for the last two years, 60% of the visitors stated that they had not been to that particular restaurant before the event. She added that the event meal price of \$17.57, also encouraged Warren County residents to patronize local restaurants. For 2010, she said, they were looking to capitalize on the historic dollar amount of \$17.57 and the Military Road.

George Gedney, Treasurer of Queensbury Little League, Inc., introduced himself and stated that they had been honored to be granted the Midatlantic Regional Qualifier for Cal Ripkin Baseball. He explained that Cal Ripkin Baseball was the second largest youth baseball organization behind Little League and added that it was the youth division for Babe Ruth Baseball. He added that it had taken four years in order to get the event to come to the area. He said that the event was the final stop for the Atlantic Coast teams to qualify for the World Series. He said that it had taken four years to convince the producers of the event to come to the area, due to the anticipated costs. He added that normally they went to city areas as opposed to areas that attracted tourists. He noted that there was no advertising listed in the budget because the participants were contractually bound to attend the event. He added that

126 families would attend the event for four nights. He apprised that he was working with two hotels in the Town of Lake George and one hotel in the Town of Queensbury to provide reasonable rates to the families. He said that their budget was approximately \$7,500 to hold the baseball games over a four-day period and the revenue opportunities for the organization were minimal. He explained that for the event the families would spend money on hotel rooms, restaurants and activities in the evenings. He said that he was requesting \$4,250 to help offset the costs. He added that they would be very grateful for any funding received. He noted that due to the fact that they were hosting the event, the team did not need to qualify by winning a State event.

Mr. Kenny said that the Workshop Session typically lasted two to three hours. He added that the applicants were welcome to stay but would not be allowed to participate in the session. He said that the Special Event Fund for 2010 was established by 10% of the 2008 occupancy tax collections, which amounted to approximately \$330,000. He said that while particular emphasis was placed on the number of bed nights, there were other factors that were considered, including economic impact, length of the event, month of the event and whether or not it was a new event. He advised that the Special Event Funding was a vital part of tourism promotion. He stated that decisions may or may not be made during the session and the applicants would be notified promptly. He apprised that there was no appeal process for those that were declined funding; although, he added, the applicants were free to address the Committee at the January meeting. He remarked that the applicants could call Leisa Grant, Principal Account Clerk for the Tourism Department, the next day to determine the status of their application.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Tessier and carried unanimously to adjourn to a workshop session.

The workshop session was held from 10:27 a.m. - 11:39 a.m.

The Committee reconvened.

Mr. Kenny stated that there had been \$330,000 in Special Event Funding available and the Committee had made decisions to award \$329,250, with \$750 remaining. He noted that there were two applications that were not considered because they had not been received by the December 1, 2009 deadline. He added that the two applications would be reviewed at the January Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee meeting.

Pursuant to the workshop session, Mr. Kenny apprised that the Committee had decided to award occupancy tax funding to the following organizations:

- Adirondack Promotions, LLC for the 2010 LakeGeorge.com Familiy Fun Festival to be held on July 7-9, 2010, in the amount of \$8,000;
- Adirondack Promotions, LLC for the 2010 Lake George Elvis Festival, to be held on June 3-6, 2010, in the amount of \$6,000;
- Adirondack Sports Complex, LLC for the Winter & Summer Youth Softball Tournament, to be held on various dates, in the amount of \$10,000;
- Adirondack Wedding Association for an event held on January 9-10, 2010, in the amount of \$1,000;
- Adirondack Theater Festival, Inc. for the 2010 Summer Season of Professional Theater, to be held on June 23, 2010 through July 31, 2010, in the amount of \$10,000;

- Albany Rods & Kustoms, Inc. for the 22nd Annual Adirondack National Car Show, to be held on September 10-12, 2010, in the amount of \$15,000;
- Americade, Inc. for the Annual Americade Motorcycle Rally to be held on June 7-12, 2010, in the amount of \$50,000;
- Bolton Landing Chamber of Commerce for the Bolton Landing Women's Weekend, to be held May 14-16, 2010, in the amount of \$10,000;
- Cooperative Committee for the Have a Seat in Glens Falls Event, to be held on May 31, 2010 through September 6, 2010, in the amount of \$5,000;
- Gore Mountain Regional Chamber of Commerce for the Adirondack Adventure Festival, to be held on April 30, 2010 through May 2, 2010, in the amount of \$9,000;
- Great Escape Theme Park, LP for the Holiday in the Park Event, to be held December 10-31, 2010, in the amount of \$25,000;
- Hudson Valley Volunteer Firemen's Association (HVVFA) for the HVVFA Convention and Parades, to be held on June 16-20, 2010, in the amount \$20,000;
- Hyde Collection Trust for the Andrew Wyeth: An American Legend Exhibit, to be held on June 11, 2010 through September 5, 2010, in the amount of \$13,500;
- Lake George Arts Project, Inc. for the Lake George Jazz Weekend, to be held on September 18-19, 2010, in the amount of \$5,000;
- Lake George Community Band for the 2010 Lake George Community Band Festival, to be held on July 17-18, 2010, was awarded no funding;
- Lake George Community Band for the 2010 Summer & Holiday Concert Series to be held on various dates, in the amount of \$1,000;
- Lake George Forum III, Inc. for the Summer Concert Series, to be held June through September 2010, in the amount of \$9,000;
- Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce for the Lake George Region Restaurant Weeks, to be held June 20-26, 2010 and September 12-18, 2010, in the amount of \$8,000;
- Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce for the Canadian Visitor Promotional Program, to be held January through December 2010, in the amount of \$7,000;
- Lake George Winter Carnival, Inc. for the 2010 Lake George Winter Carnival, to be held in January and February 2010, in the amount of \$5,000;
- LARAC (Lower Adirondack Regional Arts Council) for the Summer and Fall LARAC Festivals, to be held June 13-14, 2010 and November 6-7, 2010, in the amount of \$3,000;
- Marcella Sembrich Memorial Association, Inc. for the "Summer of Barber" 2010 Summer Concert Series, to be held on various dates June through September 2010, in the amount of \$2,000;
- Last of the Mohicans Outdoor Drama, Inc. for The Last of the Mohicans Outdoor Drama, to be held on August 5-15, 2010, in the amount \$10,000;
- New York State (NYS) Public High School Athletic Association for the NYS High School Basketball Championships, to be held in March 2010, in the amount of \$50,000;
- NYS Public High School Athletic Association for the Girls Volleyball Championships, to be held November 11, 2010 and November 19-21, 2010, in the amount of \$2,500;
- North Creek Business Alliance, Inc. for the North Creek/Gore Mountain Shuttle Service, to be held January 1, 2010 through March 14, 2010, in the amount of

\$9,000;

- Northeast Winter Classic All-Breed Dog Show to be held on January 30-31, 2010, in the amount of \$750;
- North Warren Chamber of Commerce for the 11th Annual Halloween Pug Parade & Party, to be held October 9 and 17, 2010, in the amount of \$2,500;
- Queensbury Little League, Inc. for the Cal Ripkin Middle Atlantic Regional Baseball Tournament, to be held on July 28, 2010 through August 1, 2010, in the amount of \$2,000;
- Ski Areas of New York, Inc. for the Ski Areas of New York Conference and Expo, to be held on September 21-23, 2010, in the amount of \$5,000;
- Upper Hudson Maple Producers Association for the New York State Maple Weekend, to be held March 20-21, 2010 and March 27-28, 2010, in the amount of \$3,000;
- Velo Quebec Evenement for Le Grand Tour, to be held August 7-8, 2010, in the amount of \$3,000;
- Village of Lake George for the Queen's Race Weekend 2010, to be held on May 21-23, 2010, in the amount of \$6,000;
- Warrensburg Chamber of Commerce for the World's Largest Garage Sale, to be held on October 2-3, 2010, in the amount of \$10,000;
- Warrensburg Wrestling Club for the Northern New York Vintage Snowsled Racers Event, to be held on January 23, 2010 through February 6, 2010, in the amount of \$2,000; and
- West Glens Falls Emergency Squad, Inc. for the EMS Symposium 2010, to be held on January 29-30, 2010, in the amount of \$1,000.

Mr. Kenny reiterated that those applicants that wished to appeal could do so at the January Committee meeting. He noted that typically they did have some events that cancelled and the funding would be returned to Special Event Funding to be re-disbursed.

Mr. Sherry thanked the Committee for the funds that were awarded to the events. He said that he imagined that the process was cumbersome. He commented that he supported Americade and the Basketball Tournament; however, he added, there were other events on the list that could become cornerstone events or 'mega events' for Warren County. He advised that the way the criteria was set up, Americade and the Basketball Tournament, continued to receive funding at a set amount, while the other events received a reduced amount of funding each year. He added that many of the events that received reduced funding, were actually proposing new ways to utilize funding. He said that it was important to take this into consideration in the future.

Mr. Champagne agreed with Mr. Sherry and added that he thought the Committee should look at weaning away from the cornerstone events, which had received full funding in the past. He said that if there were other events out there that had the same potential as Americade, he would like the Committe to take a look at them. He added that the application should request the three-year or five-year projections that were anticipated for the event. Mr. Sherry noted the two events from the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce had expanded: the Lake George Region Restaurant Weeks, which had grown from one week to two weeks; and the Canadian Visitor Promotion Program, which had increased from five months to twelve months of promotion. The Lake George Elvis Festival, he added, had been designed after the Collingwood Elvis Festival in Collingwood, Ontario, which was an event that attracted 40,000

visitors. With continued investment in the event, he noted, they felt that they could grow to an event similar to the Collingwood Elvis Festival. Mr. Kenny said that the Committee was continually evaluating the point system and the way that the applications were judged. He stated that he felt the point system should have been revamped last year, as the applicants had become familiar with the point system and were keying their applications to meet the criteria. Mr. Geraghty asked if the events were reviewed to compare the actual results to those that were listed as anticipated. Mr. Kenny responded that the applicants were required to submit a recap of the event, which were reviewed by the Committee.

As there was no further business to come before the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee, on motion made by Mr. Champagne and seconded by Mr. Merlino, Mr. Kenny adjourned the meeting at 11:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted, Charlene DiResta, Senior Legislative Office Specialist